

Teachers Resource Guide

Elizabeth Browne Transcript

Who are you and why are you at Jamestown (or in Virginia)? What year is it?

Good day to you. I am Elizabeth Browne. My mother named me for Queen Elizabeth, after whom Virginia was named. After my father made those bad investments, life wasn't the same for our family. No more new clothes or tasty food. I had to wash stockings, polish kettles and wipe my baby brother's bottom. That's no life for a young lady of quality! One day, I was shopping for cabbages (cabbages!) in the market. I read one of the broadsheets posted all over London, advertising for brides for those Virginia men. Those "honest and industrious" Virginia men. Well, the word "industrious" caught my eye. And "honest" never hurts, I suppose. I received my parents' blessings, and boarded the Tiger in September of this very year: 1621.

Describe your daily activities

The capital of Virginia: doesn't that sound like it should be an absolutely splendid place, with shops and playhouses and packed with refined gentlemen? Here's what happened when the Tiger docked last week, just before Christmas. From my vantage point at the ship's rail, I espied a rickety fence, which I learned later was a fortification. A bowlegged boy was galloping from one ramshackle hovel to the next, squealing, "The maids is here!" One by one, the so-called gentlemen of Virginia made their appearance. Well, at least there are plenty of potential husbands. I only wish that they didn't all reek of tobacco and wear clothing ten years out of date. Oh, none of them looks like much just now, but I will use my powers of discrimination to select the most likely. Then, when we are wed, I can concentrate my energies on making him into a proper gentleman.

What do you think about Jamestown and Virginia since you arrived?

Someday, I will thrill my grandchildren with the story of my voyage to Virginia. One morning, the lad in the crow's nest cried, "Sails on the horizon!" The ship came closer and closer! It fired its cannon across our bow! Such dreadful enemies: Turkish pirates! And our captain offered no defense. He claimed that if he surrendered peacefully, the pirates might well go easy on our ship. Coward! I could have been seized to join a sultan's harem! And, indeed, the Turks captured two boys, as well as some valuables. What a blessing to arrive safely in Virginia! This is a rough and wretched place, but I ask for no pity. Virginia holds much promise - if you don't compromise and don't lose heart. And, when I find the right husband, I will remind him of this every single day.

What expectations do you have for your future?

Once I've found Mr. Good-enough-for-now, I'll get to work on him. Out of the 700 men in this colony, there must be one with enough drive and ambition to be my husband. After the wedding, we'll take advantage of the headright system in place in Virginia. The servants we bring over will work hard for us for five to seven years. We'll also receive fifty acres of land for each one we bring over. How can we not succeed? The more tobacco we produce, the richer we will be. And we must be sure to indenture a few meek and homely girls to tend the household, girls who won't get married off right away and leave me in the lurch. Once my husband becomes a gentleman, with leisure time to pursue political ambitions, he'll serve as a Burgess or, better

yet, a member of the Governor's Council. When I attend church on his arm, all the other planters will envy my fortunate husband.

Items that would identify Elizabeth Browne:

Women's fine clothing

scent bottle

pen, ink well, paper

Wine bottle, wine glass, chinese porcelain tea cup